

COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

ADVANCE

SPRING 2025

MAGAZINE

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

ILLUMINATING A NEW VISION IN
CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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THE LEADING VOICE OF CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

CCCU Upcoming Events

Fall 2025

Legal & Public Policy Conference
Dallas Baptist University | Dallas, TX
September 15 - 17



Imago Dei Conference: Pursuing Biblical Diversity, Belonging, and Hospitality
Indiana Wesleyan University | Marion, IN
October 8 - 10



2026

**International Forum and
Celebration of CCCU's 50th Anniversary**
Gaylord Texan Resort | Dallas, Texas
January 29 - February 1



Learn more at cccu.org/events



FROM THE PRESIDENT | [DAVID A. HOAG, PH.D.](#)

From the President

President David A. Hoag, Ph.D.



During my first half year as president, I have been blessed to witness God's guiding hand on our campuses. I have found inspiration through campus visits, interactions with presidents, and discussions with board members. The current season in higher education is marked by significant changes, with causes ranging from the enrollment cliff to cultural and political pressures. Yet institutions remain steadfast in their mission, embracing innovation and collaborating to foster a thriving future as they trust in God's plan.


In my interactions with campus staff, faculty, board members, and students, a consistent theme of hope emerges, and one thing is clear: God's presence is everywhere on our campuses. He walks alongside every professor who creates a new curriculum and each student who discovers a new calling. God animates each hand that brings beauty to life, nurturing every seed of an idea into a fully realized creation. He comforts in times of struggle, allowing goals to be achieved with grace and a renewed sense of purpose.

In Proverbs 16:3, Solomon writes, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans." What an encouragement during seasons of change! God is in control, and He is working through you on your campus. Whether you are faithfully teaching classes, supporting faculty (including adjuncts—see pg. 18), developing innovating new programs and partnerships (see pg. 30 and pg. 36), or serving on campus in any of the other myriad functions that make Christian higher education possible, God will establish your plans. He walks alongside you, offering divine comfort, inspiration, and grace.

One of the most important ways we receive God's guidance is through His word. Recently, I've been reflecting on the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:1-23—a parable that can serve as a timely reminder for all of us, no matter where we are in our walk with the Lord. In this familiar parable, Jesus speaks to the condition of our hearts and how we receive and respond to God's Word. At the core is the seed, symbolizing the Word of God. The sower scatters seeds across various types of soil: a path, rocky soil, thorny ground, and good soil. Each responds differently to the seed, illustrating how our hearts can either hinder or nurture spiritual growth.

As we walk with the Lord day by day, let us be mindful of our hearts. All too easily, distractions can serve as rocks in the soil of our heart, making it harder for God's Word to take root. To quote Solomon again, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything

you do flows from it" (Proverbs 4:23). Amidst the busyness of life, let us remember to intentionally create space for spiritual practices, such as prayer, Bible study, and community involvement. These not only shape the soil of our hearts, but they also serve as vital avenues through which God communicates with us.

The Lord God, Creator and Sustainer of all the Earth, is with you. He knows the dreams we harbor in our hearts and the challenges we face in the work of Christian higher education. Through His grace and by His guidance, as a community of Christ-centered institutions we will continue to provide a beacon of hope, wisdom, and transformative education in an ever-changing world. May we confidently approach the future, knowing that our God walks alongside us in wisdom and truth, every step of the way. 



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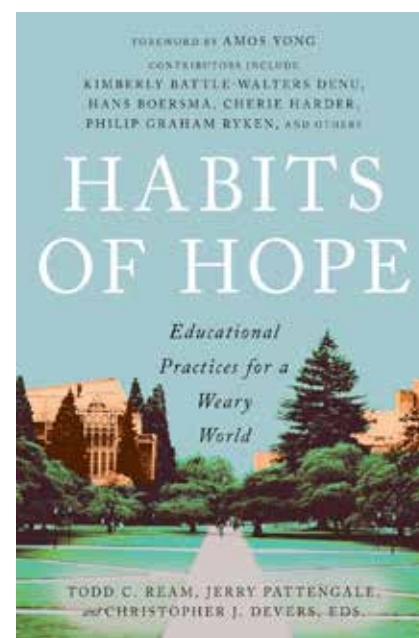


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THE COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (CCCU)

is a higher education association of more than 170 Christian institutions around the world. Since 1976, the CCCU has served as the leading voice of Christian higher education. With campuses across the globe, including more than 130 in the U.S. and Canada and more than 30 from an additional 18 countries, CCCU institutions are accredited, comprehensive colleges and universities whose missions are Christ-centered and rooted in the historic Christian faith.

THE MISSION OF THE CCCU is to advance the cause of Christ-centered higher education throughout the world.

DISTRIBUTION

ADVANCE is published each year in the fall and spring and is mailed to members, affiliates, and friends of the CCCU. It is also available online at www.cccu.org/magazine. Direct questions and letters to the editor to editor@cccu.org.

ADVERTISING

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Celebrating a Fresh Season in Christian Higher Education



I was honored to serve as a college professor at CCCU institutions for over a decade. Every year, I looked for ways to present material in a fresh, memorable manner. I frequently stated that I was not teaching students but “future colleagues” whom I wanted to work with someday. Every project and assignment was designed to build the scaffolding of success, showing the value of connecting classroom skills to purposeful action and service for others. There was nothing more rewarding than seeing how God’s gifts and talents were revealed through the work of students who approached their tasks with long-term dedication, applying newly acquired knowledge inside and outside the classroom. I knew that, no matter how challenging circumstances were on an individual level or on a broader scale, God’s will was being fulfilled through Christian higher education.

This issue of the spring *ADVANCE* highlights the work on our campuses and the constant beauty of His presence as we incorporate faith into higher education. As you read this issue, I hope you feel inspired in exploring a new season of opportunities on your campus.

This issue features incredible work at several CCCU institutions as they navigate a new season in Christian higher education. It also showcases interviews from the new CCCU president, Dr. David Hoag, and our vice president of research, Dr. Stan Rosenberg, as he celebrates over 25 years of leading Scholarship and Christianity in Oxford (SCIO). The issue explores opportunities for adaptation, engagement, and growth in the face of the “enrollment cliff.” Additionally, Jerusalem University College President Oliver Hersey shares his experiences navigating adversity over an 18-month period following the October 7 attacks in Israel, reminding us of the need for peace and prayer during times of uncertainty and tumult. Finally, articles about adjunct faculty well-being and the value of STEM in Christian higher education offer unique insight into timely and valuable areas of academia.

I am reminded of Proverbs 16:3 throughout this issue: “Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” As you read through this issue, I hope you’ll feel inspired and energized as we celebrate an encouraging, fresh time in Christian higher education, continuing to do God’s work on campuses around the globe. 🌍

DR. AMANDA STAGGENBORG is the vice president of communications for the CCCU.

“Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and He will establish your plans.”


Proverbs 16:3

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CATHOLIC CHARITIES BUREAU VS. WISCONSIN LABOR & INDUSTRY REVIEW COMMISSION

The CCCU continues to advocate on your behalf in the judiciary. We filed an amicus brief in the *Catholic Charities Bureau versus Wisconsin Labor & Industry Review Commission* case, which is before the Supreme Court. In this case, the Wisconsin Supreme Court decided that Catholic Charities was not religious enough to qualify for a religious exemption from the state unemployment insurance plan. While the court acknowledged the mission to “carry on the redeeming work of our Lord by reflecting gospel values and the moral teaching of the church,” it concluded that “services provided by a religiously run orphanage and a secular one do not differ in any meaningful sense.” Because the activities of Catholic Charities could be and are performed by secular organizations and because Catholic Charities did not only hire Catholics, they were not religious enough to qualify. Our brief argues that “by deciding whether a religiously motivated activity is sufficiently religious (regardless of the criteria it employed), the court impermissibly strayed beyond its constitutional bounds, infringing Petitioners’ right to determine and exercise their own religious beliefs and practices.” The Supreme Court granted cert and will hear oral arguments later this year.

RECONCILIATION PROCESS IN THE U.S. CONGRESS

The House and Senate are seeking significant cuts to federal funding in the ongoing reconciliation process, including reductions to education spending. The bill may include some cost-saving efforts such as student loan reform and institutional accountability, whether through risk-sharing or a gainful-employment-for-all approach. Both policy approaches take a narrow, economic view of higher education, which harms institutions that focus on the holistic development of individuals across a variety of disciplines. CCCU students serve significantly more in fields that prioritize societal benefits rather than earnings, such as counseling, mental health, family service, and community service. Nearly 13% of CCCU graduates serve in these fields, compared to 4.2% of graduates from all four-year institutions. Including ministry positions would make the CCCU numbers even higher. The CCCU is working diligently to meet with members of Congress to protect institutions that graduate students who choose to serve because of their faith, while also finding common ground on spending reforms that produce prudent financial stewardship.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESTORATION ACT WAIVERS

In February, the CCCU, alongside a group of several religious organizations, scholars, and leaders, signed a letter sent to the Democratic and Republican leaders of the House and Senate requesting protection of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA). This bill had overwhelming bipartisan support when it was passed and is one of the most important statutes for religious freedom in the nation’s history. Since its passage, several bills have contained language that would waive RFRA’s application to certain federal laws. None of these waivers have been signed into law, but there have been waivers sponsored by members on both sides of the political aisle. The CCCU continues to advocate in Congress to protect this long-standing statute and ensure its religious freedom protections are not eroded by any waiver.

CCCU MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

At the January board meeting, the CCCU Board of Directors approved one new member, who joins the CCCU’s expansive network of more than 170 Christian colleges and universities around the globe: University of Eastern Africa, Baraton (Baraton, Kenya).

The Board also approved a change in membership status. Warner Pacific University (Portland, OR), formerly a collaborative partner, is now a governing member of the CCCU.

2025 CCCU AWARD RECIPIENTS



CYDNEY BRIDGES
YOUNG ALUMNI AWARD

The Young Alumni Award recognizes an individual who has graduated from a CCCU member institution within the past decade and whose work demonstrates uncommon leadership or success that reflects the values of Christian higher education. Cydney Bridges, a 2023 graduate of Huntington University, serves as a nurse providing critical care for children with severe lung illnesses. She was also named the second runner-up and Miss Congeniality in the Miss America 2024 pageant. Cydney has utilized her platform to advocate for youth mentorship and empowerment.



SARAH FLANAGAN
CHAMPION OF HIGHER
EDUCATION AWARD

The Champion of Higher Education Award is presented to individuals who have demonstrated strategic vision and unparalleled dedication to the field of higher education. This year, Sarah Flanagan is retiring from her role as vice president for government relations and policy development at the National Association of Independent Colleges & Universities (NAICU). During her tenure, Sarah has been instrumental in successful policy efforts, including securing bipartisan political and funding support for federal student aid programs, creating new tax incentives for families to save and pay for college, and helping to ensure an appropriate balance between federal support for students and oversight of higher education institutions.



SHIRLEY V. HOOGSTRA
MARK O. HATFIELD AWARD

The Mark O. Hatfield Leadership Award is presented to individuals who have demonstrated uncommon leadership that reflects the values of Christian higher education. Shirley V. Hoogstra served as the seventh president of the CCCU from 2014-2024. During her decade of leadership, she oversaw the organization’s increased advocacy efforts, expanded membership, improved organizational finances, and strengthened professional development programs to fortify Christian higher education for the future.

IMPORTANT TAX BILLS INTRODUCED TO CONGRESS

The CCCU supports two new tax bills recently introduced. The first would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make the Section 127 tax exclusion for certain employer payments of student loans under educational assistance programs permanent. Section 127 is a provision of the tax code that allows employers to provide up to \$5,250 of tax-free educational assistance to employees, covering the costs of tuition, fees, books, and supplies. In the CARES Act, this tax provision was temporarily expanded to include the repayment of student loans, but that provision is set to expire at the end of 2025. This amendment would make that expansion permanent and is just one piece of larger efforts the CCCU supports to increase and expand the Section 127 tax exclusion. The second bill is the Charitable Act, which incentivizes and rewards more Americans to give to charitable organizations. Currently, the charitable deduction is only available to those who itemize, comprising only 10% of taxpayers. This bill seeks to restore and expand the charitable deduction to include non-itemizing taxpayers, a policy that proved successful during its implementation in 2020 and 2021. The legislation would also make gifts to donor-advised funds eligible for the universal charitable deduction, further incentivizing charitable giving.

Reflecting on 25 Years of Faith, Formation, and Scholarship in Oxford

An Interview with SCIO's Dr. Stan Rosenberg

In 2024, Dr. Stan Rosenberg celebrated his 25th anniversary with the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities. Dr. Rosenberg moved to Oxford for the CCCU in 1999 and founded Scholarship & Christianity in Oxford (SCIO) in 2000. SCIO is the CCCU's U.K. subsidiary, serving to facilitate research and scholarship in Oxford for undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty members and leaders from CCCU member institutions. Since then, he has led a team in Oxford that has served nearly 4,000 students, 500 faculty and senior administrators, and 80 SCIO staff.

Dr. Rosenberg was also appointed vice president of research and scholarship at the CCCU in 2019. In that position, he oversees the CCCU's research initiatives, including major faculty and institutional grant projects, the annual Collaborative Assessment Project (CAP) and compensation surveys, and related areas that enhance the capacities of CCCU members.

An active scholar himself, Dr. Rosenberg is a member of the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford, is on the editorial board of several journals, is a fellow of the International Society of Science & Religion, and was recently elected a fellow of the American Scientific Affiliation.

To mark his quarter-century with the CCCU and SCIO, Dr. Rosenberg recently sat down with Dr. Joseph Clair—a SCIO graduate who now serves as associate provost at George Fox University (Newberg, OR)—to discuss Augustine's applications to Christian and wider culture, student formation, SCIO's trajectory over the past 25 years, hope for the future of Christian higher education, and more.

DR. JOSEPH CLAIR: I thought I'd begin with your own scholarly work. You're really a full-flight administrator and leader, but I know we both have shared passion for theological studies and academic work. Could you describe the genesis of your own passion for early Christianity and St. Augustine? How did your own scholarly life begin?

DR. STAN ROSENBERG: Well, my scholarly life in some ways comes from my growing up. My father was a medievalist, so you could say I inherited the family business. My father was a medieval historian at Colorado State, and I grew up around the history department. My father was one of those academics who was really deeply involved in the life of the university. Our table talk at dinner included the academic business.

After attending a year of Bible school, I went to Colorado State, did my undergrad where my dad was a professor, and studied history and philosophy and religious studies. I was in the honors program and wrote my honors thesis on Clement of Alexandria, the first Christian philosopher. That really set me in my path. My earliest sense of vocation that led into graduate school was a sense that evangelicals really need to understand something of the Church Fathers, that our perspective was too narrow, too flat, too thin, and we need to be thickened up by the Fathers. And so, off I went.

I had planned to go to graduate school at the University of Chicago, where I would have been in the early Christian studies program with Hans Dieter Betz. I visited and realized that was not the place for me, even though I'd been admitted and made my plans. Instead, I went to my fallback school, the University of Kansas, because it was late in the season, and I did not want to put off graduate school. There, I worked with Karl Morrison, a great Augustine scholar. The year there was really revelatory to me...especially about my lack of needed formation.

Walker Percy has a great phrase about getting As in school, but an F in life. I felt like that was happening with me around the Fathers. I was doing fine on all my academic work, but I didn't think that I was actually "getting" the Fathers. As you'll have a sense, perhaps the most important quality of a historian is empathy. If we cannot enter into the thought world of the people we're studying, we cannot tell their story. I grew up too anti-sacramental, too anti-clerical, too anti-liturgical to really get the Fathers. I didn't understand them.

It was reading Robert Webber's book, *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, that gave me the language to understand the disconnect I was experiencing. I realized that if I was going to be serious about studying the Fathers, I needed to be under Catholic and/or Orthodox scholarship. I'm not sure everyone does, but I felt I desperately needed that formation if I was going to understand the Fathers.

At the end of that first year, I felt very frustrated and not sure what to do. I had a good graduate teaching assistantship. I was living in a place with a low cost of living. There was a lot that was good about it and some lovely people I worked with. But I went to Washington for the summer to go do an internship at the C.S. Lewis Institute, partly because I wanted to get a sense of what it was to be a public intellectual. I knew instinctively what it takes to be an academic, but I didn't want to just be a scholar by default.

While I was there, I went up and used the library at Catholic University of America, and I had this epiphany: This is where I need to be. This is the place.

Through a series of events, that same day, I met the director of the academic program and ended up having a three-hour interview with him. He transferred me in on the spot. It's one of the three significant, life-changing directions I've taken where I have no regrets and I'm really grateful that I said yes. (The other two were proposing to my wife of 33 years and moving to Oxford.)

CLAIR: Can you speak to how Augustine's vision of the world might be particularly important to evangelical Christians today?

...our job is to help students be less certain, but more committed. Part of the role of education is to help students learn how to set aside those easy, simplistic certainties that don't adequately represent reality.

—Dr. Stan Rosenberg

ROSENBERG: One of the great concerns to me is how perfectionist as a culture we've become. Robert Markus, one of my mentors, once said to me that Augustine was the apologist for the mediocre Christian life. My first reaction with that was, really? That can't be right.

But after three or four years of continuing to work, reading what Robert and others had presented, and deeply reading many of Augustine's works, I came to realize the deep wisdom of that statement. Throughout his career, Augustine fought the perfectionists, first the fundamentalist, literalist tradition in the North African Church, and he fought the rational perfectionists of the Manichees, then the Donatists and their sacramental perfectionism, then the Roman intellectuals and the Christian naysayers with *The City of God*, and then of the individual, ethical perfectionism of Pelagius. I think those works present lessons that are worthwhile for us to think about.

We can't expect the perfect now, and we can't expect each other to be perfect now. Yet, we have required of each other, our leaders, and of our governmental structures a level of engagement that we can't actually provide ourselves, a level of follow-through, a level of responsibility. Therefore we decry it when they don't. Then, we treat those who fail as the enemy.

I think that's one of the deep lessons for our society: we've got to learn how to accept less than perfection from each other and still show grace. The North American social-political culture now is one that is not grace-giving. Social media bears a role in that, and other forms of media exacerbate our dysfunctions. As a culture, we have been trained to despise and disparage; these attitudes destroy any society.

This is where Augustine comes in. I use a personal example to convey this to my students: I love cycling. Living in a wet culture here in the U.K., as you do in Oregon, I have kept old cycles for in-town riding, though I hate riding them because they're all corroded and corrupted. But I can still use them.

For Augustine, evil has corrupted and disrupted life as it should be and life as it could be. And it affects everything. But all things derive from God's gift of creation and so to some extent are still useful. Everything is tainted, but not so tainted that the thing cannot yet be used. Now there may be things that may be so tainted that I have to stay away from because I personally do not have the ability to use it anymore. You can think of the alcoholic who has to stay away from alcohol.

But Augustine's lesson is that everything is tainted from me inward out. Everything around me—I'm talking here about moral, spiritual,

psychological, social, and political life—is afflicted and corrupted. But it's all usable in some way, whether it's the arts, whether it's the state university, whether it's George Fox, whether it's SCIO, it's all afflicted. But that's not the end of the story. That's just part of the story. And the question is not, "How can I get away from affliction?" It's, "How can I find my way to work well and winsomely and graciously amidst the afflictions and the corruptions that make up our life?"

The lesson for me from Augustine as Christians is that our job is to manage corruption well. Manage our life amidst corruption. This is particularly what I say to the folks I work with, like some of your faculty who are working on the relationships between science and religion—a topic that elicits fear and pushback from many—that one of our key jobs as teachers is to help our students manage fear. And faculty, speaking broadly, don't always think about that aspect of our vocation. They think we're here to convey true information,

and some realize that we as educators shape students. Better faculty think we're here to offer formation. But I think the other piece that we don't commonly think about and discuss as faculty is that a key job of education is teaching those who we educate to manage their fears.

Because what we're conveying creates fear: it's different, it's other, it's distinct from what the students previously learned. It's challenging our easy certainties, our easy answers. And that creates fear, so we have to manage fear. Augustine, I think, gives us tools to do that.

CLAIR: How would you describe that work of student formation now? Has it changed in the 26 years that you've been doing SCIO?

ROSENBERG: Students are really different in many ways, but I think there's still an essential key to student formation. We continue to emphasize that scholarship is not a position or career or status but a habit of mind which requires one to honestly ask thoughtful questions, think critically, investigate fully, and respond generously to the answers one discovers. As Christians, we pursue this with a vision of doing this *coram deo*, that is, with a responsibility to do so as before the face of God. One of the phrases I was taught when I first came here to Oxford by another study abroad colleague from the CCCU is that our job is to help students be less certain, but more committed. Part of the role of education is to help students learn how to set aside those easy, simplistic certainties that don't adequately represent reality.

It's not that to be certain of something is wrong. I'm not saying uncertain; I'm saying less certain, but more committed.

I can remember myself when I was 18. If you asked me to identify

the essentials of my faith, I would have filled a long scroll; it would have dropped and rolled across the floor, every line in tiny print. If you ask me today, what do I think are the essentials? I still have essentials, but they would fill a smaller space.

But that smaller space I believe I hold with much greater conviction and commitment and engagement. I've got a smaller list that has a higher degree of integrity and integration, because I can see the interconnections. I can see that if I loosen up in this area, on this commitment, if I release it, here are the implications. When I had the long list, my ability to integrate those was shoddy.

A core job of an educator, working with college students, is still to manage fear. We do that through the quality and the depth of our relationship with them. We have to win the right to speak hard truths. We do that through speaking truths we've gained. But it's also listening to the students to find out what that looks like in their life today. I think of the students I have now—the issues that they feel strongly about are often very different than students I had 10 years ago and 20 years ago.

CLAIR: As you look back on the 26 years with SCIO, what are a few bright spots, whether it's a person or event? What are the high watermarks as you reflect?

ROSENBERG: Well, first off, it's having been able to play a role directly or indirectly in the lives of the many amazing students who have come through SCIO, and to see what they're doing now. Many have gone on to graduate school, gone into serious roles within

government and society and public education, private education. I know of one recent alum from a few years back who is now in the secret service, using the skills he developed as a researcher.

Just amazing connections. I've had almost 4,000 students come through the program during my time and about 500 faculty. We've had multiple faculty who have come through the faculty projects we do who, through this, have really grown in their roles on campus and have become deans and other senior leaders, and so it's been a way to really help advance individuals and build our institutions.

I think core to my vision is helping to create resources and resourcing. And I really see my vocation much more around this sense of building capacity elsewhere. My role here reflects the many hats I wear, running a study abroad program, contributing to the Oxford Faculty of Theology and Religion, and being vice president of research for the CCCU, which involves investing in colleges like yours to help you build your capacity.

One of the great delights was the most recent large, grant-funded project we had, Supporting Structures, which was funded by both the Templeton Foundation and Murdock Trust. Leading up to that grant, I had spent years trying to think through how we build up the science faculty at our member institutions when they're lab-based and labs are so expensive? How do I help our colleges build that?

With this last grant program, we devised an approach to provide funding and a mechanism to really help make it possible, but not by building our own bespoke faculty research labs. Rather we focused on making use of such labs already built. To participate, institutions had to establish a relationship with the local research university for their faculty to use their labs, to take advantage of the resources there.

Many of these labs are understaffed and they're really delighted to have another qualified, competent researcher come in and contribute. We did this as part of this grant—all the faculty involved, 24 faculty, nine colleges, all took great advantage of it. It worked brilliantly. All nine colleges conveyed that the relationship they formed as a part of the grant will continue beyond the life of the grant. We helped create the initial spur, but it's taken on a life of its own. And that's the best!

CLAIR: What was the origin of SCIO? How did it come about?

ROSENBERG: Back in the early 1990s, the CCCU started offering a joint summer school with the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Then in the mid-nineties, a group of honors directors from a number of colleges came to the CCCU and said, well, you're doing study abroad in Latin America and Russia, etc. Can you do something specifically for honors students?

The decision was to create a semester-long honors program in Oxford, working with the organization that they'd already been working with. The Centre then had a significant number of problems. It had quite a toxic set of relationships and other

problems, as organizations sometimes have. I want to hasten to add, that's no longer the case. The Centre is still around. It's a good place and run by people I respect.

In 1999, I was in Washington running graduate programs for Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and worked with the CCCU. Rich Gathro recruited me to come work with the Oxford program because they needed somebody who was close to medieval studies, and that's patristics, who was an administrator, who loved students, and who knew the CCCU. They wanted somebody who, because of the problems, they knew they could trust and with whom they could enjoy a good relationship.

Over the course of the next several years, we wrestled with what to do and ended up concluding the best way to solve the problem was to leave the Centre, sadly, but it was the right and wise decision to make. And so SCIO was set up as our own base, as a subsidiary of the CCCU.

For corporate reasons, we had previously needed to create a charity here in the U.K. So SCIO actually was born on July 4, 2000, as CCCU-UK. The name Scholarship & Christianity in Oxford, or SCIO, came along a little bit later, because the CCCU name was not a great name here. In the U.K. parlance, college either refers to a subsidiary, a subset of a university, like the colleges around Oxford, or it means the final two years of high school. Additionally there's not a Christian liberal arts tradition here in the same way as the U.S., so the CCCU name just didn't work in this context.

We needed to come up with a different name. The name SCIO was born over an Italian dinner with Andrew Moore, a friend on the theology faculty here. He gets the credit for the name. I get the credit of having bought him a good meal and recognizing a great name when I heard it!

CLAIR: Augustine wrote a lot about the virtue of hope, and hope has temporal and eternal extensions. As you look to the future of scholarship and Christianity, in Oxford and broadly, the church, higher education, what's giving you hope?

ROSENBERG: I see a really good movement in three areas that I think give hope.

First off, there's some really good work going on in Christian education at places like Oxford and Cambridge. I often ask our students at orientation, "How many people back home, family, friends, pastor, faculty, warn you not to come to Oxford and lose your faith?" Each term, between 20% and 80% of students raise their hands. And then I say, well, I go to a large evangelical church where, if you throw a stone, you're as statistically likely to hit a world-class scientist as you are anyone else. That's a bit of rhetorical overstatement, I suppose, but it conveys that there is a great tradition of faith and scholarship here at Oxford.

Secondly, and these are in no order, our colleges can be a beacon of hope, particularly in the midst of disarray, as we see the Department of Education dismantled, as we see NHS and NSF grants being canceled, which is impacting scholars from our campuses.



A typical CCCU campus employs, on average, maybe 150 full-time faculty. Most any one of our colleges is relatively small, and so you might envision a relatively small reach compared to, say, the University of Berkeley or Michigan State. But if you look across the ca. 130 U.S. institutions that are part of the CCCU, we employ some 33,000 full- and part-time faculty. That's a massive size. Together, we actually have a broad range and depth available and offer some really capable scholars who are committed and deep Christian thinkers. That can be a great source of hope.

Part of my role as VP of research is to keep thinking about and working on ways that we can capitalize on and strengthen what we do to consolidate the effort of 33,000 people, not just individual campuses. In this season where there is so much disarray and discontent and confusion, this is a time for us as Christian colleges and faculty both to step in to the disarray and to work together.

Amongst leadership, I see a real will for that, which I don't think was as evident 10 or 15 years ago; there was not then much thinking along those lines. Now, in my estimation and experience, our members see each other less as competitors, and more as complementing institutions.

More than that, per your question, hope is both for the here and now but also it is eschatological. What we do here now matters, but it is not the whole show... in fact, it is only a tiny smidge of the big show! Hope does not rest on our potential laurels now.

The third source of hope is outside of our movement, and I think it's really important: the rise of the Christian study centers at the big secular universities like the University of Virginia and University of Michigan, the state and private universities. These centers are doing much work, often working with our Christian colleges and faculty. They are working on developing coursework and formation that is complementary and voluntary for students, which is akin to what we think about in terms of the integration of faith and learning. In a number of instances, they're drawing upon our CCCU faculty to support and strengthen that. I think those are all things for us in our industry to be hopeful about and understand as ways that we can, in our work, enhance the broader, common good.

CLAIR: Well, Dr. Rosenberg, thank you for the fruit of your teaching, your work as a scholar and administrator, and for building an institution that has formed so many, including myself. Thank you for your time.

ROSENBERG: Thank you, my pleasure. What a great time to be together. This interview itself has got to be a highlight for me in my 25 years! 🙏



STANLEY P. ROSENBERG, Ph.D.
Vice President of Research and Scholarship,
CCCU
Executive Director,
SCIO

Stan Rosenberg is the founder and executive director of SCIO: Scholarship and Christianity in Oxford and vice president for research and scholarship for the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (SCIO is the CCCU's U.K. subsidiary). He is a member of the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford. A fellow of the International Society for Science & Religion, he is a historian of late antiquity and early Christianity focusing on Greco-Roman and early Christian cosmology, the Latin West, and Augustine, in particular. Rosenberg directs projects shaping a wide variety of international students including Logos (working with the Museum of the Bible for which he is an advisor). Active in science and religion discussions, he is on the BioLogos advisory council and the general editor and an author of *Finding Ourselves after Darwin: Conversations about the Image of God, Original Sin and the Problem of Evil* (Baker Academic, 2018).



JOSEPH CLAIR, Ph.D.
Associate Provost, Division of Humanities, Honors, and Education & Professor of Theology and Culture
George Fox University

A native Oregonian, Joseph Clair followed his educational pursuits all over the world and earned degrees in both England and the United States. He became professor of theology and ethics and now associate provost at George Fox University after receiving his doctorate in religion, ethics, and politics from Princeton University in 2013. He earned his bachelor's degree at Wheaton College (IL), a master's in theological studies from Duke, a master's in philosophy at Fordham, and a master's in philosophy of religion from Cambridge where he studied as a Gates Cambridge Scholar. He is the author of *Discerning the Good in the Letters and Sermons of Augustine* (Oxford University Press, 2016) and *On Education, Formation, Citizenship, and The Lost Purpose of Learning* (Bloomsbury, 2017), as well as numerous articles and essays on faith, culture, education, and ethics.

In this season where there is so much disarray and discontent and confusion, this is a time for us as Christian colleges and faculty both to step into the disarray and work together.

—Dr. Stan Rosenberg



Navigating Adversity in Jerusalem

The Story of Jerusalem University
College Since October 7, 2023

*By Dr. Oliver Hersey, President of
Jerusalem University College*

Holding my son and daughter, and holding back tears, I said goodbye to my family as I prepared to return to Jerusalem. On October 7, 2023, we were just wrapping up a family vacation in Greece. We had never imagined anything like the horrific attacks in southwestern Israel. With the situation fluid and unknown, my wife and I agreed it was best for me to return to campus alone, and as quickly as possible. It would be eight long weeks before I embraced my family again—and much longer before we regained a sense of stability.

Shortly before the October 7 attacks, I had entered my third academic year as president of Jerusalem University College (JUC). Founded in 1957, JUC’s original purpose was training Christian leaders in the contexts of scripture through immersive study in Israel. Before 1997, we were known as the Institute of Holy Land Studies, and for decades we have enjoyed partnerships with scores of other Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries, who send their students to JUC for supplemental, three-week intensive courses or semester-long study abroad experiences. Each semester, we serve a remarkable cohort of graduate and undergraduate students in Jerusalem. At times, we may have 50 students studying in Jerusalem during a fall semester while another 150 nontraditional students arrive to take a two-week, non-

credit “Pastor and Parishioner” course, typically scheduled for early November. These seasons get quite busy as we facilitate immersive study experiences for a vast array of people in Israel.

My first two years as president were spent surviving and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and its financial impact. Our team worked tirelessly for two years to build back enrollment. The leadership team charted out a long-range strategic plan centered around initiatives to accelerate growth, strengthen systems, connect alumni and stakeholders, restore facilities, and refine and expand academic programs. With energized teams—one in the U.S., the other in Jerusalem—an invigorated board of directors, and a projected enrollment of 1,200 students in our long- and short-term academic programs, the ‘23-24 academic year promised new hope. As the fall semester started, 44 students began their studies in Jerusalem. With peace of mind, my family and I booked a trip to Greece during our kids’ fall break and began counting down the days until our departure—October 2.

As my family and I departed with bags packed for six days of beach fun in Mykonos, we said goodbye to our team and the students living on campus in Jerusalem. We had a lovely time—until I was abruptly awoken on Saturday, October 7. Something terrible had happened in Israel. We had traveled to Greece with a friend from Jerusalem, who happened to be the Middle East correspondent for a large news company. He was deeply engrossed on his phone, his expression weighed down with concern. My own phone vibrated nonstop with text messages and phone calls from my colleagues on campus, informing me that students and staff were sheltering in place due to several early morning sirens notifying residents of rocket fire.

For the next several hours we huddled around our phones, the only physical objects now tethering us to Israel. We gathered as much information as we could—a surprise attack out of Gaza, hundreds of unsuspecting Israelis killed, hundreds taken as hostages, hundreds of rockets fired into Israel. It was sickening to read, and overwhelming to process. On campus, the JUC team acted swiftly and decisively to ensure all our students were safe. Nearly all students were already on campus, but two had traveled south for a weekend camping trip in Timnah Park, and another was in a suburb a mere dozen miles from where the violence was taking place. Thankfully, we were able to get everyone back to campus or out of Israel safely over the next several days and weeks. In the aftermath of the attacks, some students and staff opted to leave Israel, but many chose to stay in Jerusalem to continue their studies.

More than 18 months have passed since this moment in Greece. The war has redefined so much of our lives, as well as Jerusalem University College as an institution. The fact that JUC remains open and serving students amazes me. As I write this, we have 12 graduate students working on JUC degrees, along with one undergraduate student from Columbia International University in South Carolina. While the war has remained a fixture in the background of our work, it has had little effect on the day-to-day in Jerusalem. With our seasoned faculty, students have safely and without issue visited 100% of the sites we typically visit in a standard semester.

The road to recovery remains long, but for the first time since October 7, my family finally feels stable. Over the past 18 months, I spent a total of 20 weeks apart from them. Personally, this has been

the hardest year of my life. I love challenging ventures that demand strategic thinking—that is what drew me to JUC in the first place. Yet, this adversity has stretched me physically, emotionally, and spiritually in ways I could not have imagined. Leading two teams on two different continents with very different realities requires constant communication. Managing the finances of an institution impacted so drastically and so quickly has required lengthy conversations with leadership and the board of directors.

Today, as I reflect on our journey, I am proud of JUC’s response and management in an unstable and unpredictable environment, of my family’s resilience and sacrifice, and of my team’s courage, flexibility, and brilliance through such adversity. By God’s grace, our donor base has doubled, lifting some of the immense financial burden caused by the estimated 85% loss of revenue. Although the war continues, we maintain hope and confidence that God will continue to show his faithfulness to this Christian school situated on Mount Zion. 🇮🇱



OLIVER HERSEY, Ph.D.
President, Jerusalem University College

Dr. Oliver Hersey began serving as the 11th president of Jerusalem University College on August 1, 2021. Having been shaped by his own experiences in the Holy Land, Dr. Hersey desires to help students better understand the Bible by providing them with opportunities to study in Israel the geographical, cultural, and historical contexts of God’s Word. He is a pastor in the Reformed Church of America, previously serving as the director of discipleship and teaching at Calvary Church in Orland Park, IL. With over 20 years of combined experience in fields related to education, research, pastoring, coaching, and management, Dr. Hersey is driven to help grow both people and organizations for service in God’s kingdom.

Dr. Hersey earned his B.A. in secondary education: mathematics and Spanish from Calvin College; his M.A. in biblical archaeology and ancient Near Eastern languages (summa cum laude) from Trinity International University; and his Ph.D. in theological studies: Old Testament and ancient Near Eastern history and languages from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.



JUC staff, from right to left, Nicole Ottavi, Oliver Hersey, James Holt.



Dr. Hersey (left) in Jerusalem with graduate students.



Dr. Hersey teaching in the Judean wilderness.



Dr. Hersey with Spring 2024 graduates.

Photos courtesy of Dr. Oliver Hersey

ADJUNCT

ADJUNCT FACULTY WELL-BEING:

WHEN IT HAPPENS, AND WHEN IT DOESN'T



**BY DR. JEFF CLAWSON,
DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP,
GRANTS, & RESEARCH, CCCU**

It comes as no surprise to anyone working at an institution of higher education today that the hiring of adjunct faculty by U.S. colleges and universities has been on an upward trend. Since the 1970s, continuing economic pressures (including sharp increases in the cost of higher education and the impact of the 2020 COVID pandemic, among other factors) have resulted in an increasing number of adjunct faculty across U.S. colleges and universities. For CCCU institutions, and other similar private nonprofits, adjunct faculty have become a part of an economic sustainability model that is not only likely permanent but also continuing to increase.

As of 2023, on average 60% of CCCU U.S. member colleges and universities' professoriate are part-time faculty.[1] Also similar to trends across the American higher education landscape, the number of adjunct faculty at CCCU member institutions continues to rise. This national trend has often been termed the "adjunctification" of higher education.[2] A primary concern for higher education practitioners is how this trend might negatively impact student outcomes and the

well-being of contingent faculty. To investigate this topic, the CCCU recently initiated a project funded by a grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, designed to study the well-being of adjuncts employed by CCCU institutions and help member institutions support their adjunct faculty members.

Higher education research literature is replete with the impact that the adjunctification of higher education has on those hired as contingent faculty and on their students. First is the well-known pay disparity between adjunct faculty and their full-time colleagues. The salary disparity is also quite salient for CCCU adjuncts. Full-time faculty who teach in the same discipline or program often earn in a month what an adjunct earns throughout the entire semester. Adjunct faculty who desire to teach for their living often must work for multiple institutions to make ends meet, which can negatively impact faculty well-being and student interactions.

Although fulfilling the goals of higher education requires the work of administration, faculty, and staff across college and university campuses, faculty are, and always will be, the principal force that impacts the young (and sometimes not-so-young) minds entering these institutions. Decades of research reveals the positive impact of quality faculty-student interactions on student outcomes. These interactions continue to be one of the greatest predictors of student retention and success.[3] However, adjuncts who are forced to teach at multiple institutions to cobble together a living will have even less time to interact with their students, limiting opportunities for high-quality interactions. Therefore, there continues to be a tension between the rise of adjuncts to ease financial strains on institutions while higher education practitioners simultaneously work to make positive impacts on student learning and success. This tension requires a clear focus on the factors that promote adjunct faculty well-being.

A qualitative study focusing on the lived experiences of CCCU adjunct faculty members revealed useful insights about how adjuncts connect well with their institutions, promoting well-being and growing in their institutional affinity, as well as what prevents positive institutional connections from taking form. It is important to note that not all adjunct faculty are the same. Some adjuncts work full-time in the private industry of their discipline and teach because of a sense of calling to impact the next generation. Others see the professoriate as their calling and career but have not yet acquired a full-time faculty position. Although diverse types of adjuncts display various trends in their needs and struggles, there are some common themes found in the experiences of most adjuncts, regardless of whether they are professional teachers or industry professionals teaching on the side.

For professors, whether full-time tenure track, adjunct, or something in between, there is a psychological need for community that affects not only the professor but also their relationship with colleagues and students. It is intuitive to think that the positive interactions adjuncts have will lead to higher institutional affinity, thereby impacting students in a positive way. In short, adjunct faculty who have positive, life-giving relationships at their institutions will, in turn, tend to have impactful relationships with students and others. However, adjunct faculty typically have tempered expectations when it comes to their

on-campus connections. The reality is that they will most likely not have a lot of them.

In most cases it is impossible for provosts or vice presidents of academic affairs to effectively shepherd all their faculty. Therefore, adjunct faculty limit their expectations about what kind of connections the institution can provide or the number of meaningful connections they will realistically develop with colleagues and students. However, the connections they have often impact well-being dramatically. This truth was illuminated through a major finding from the study—when it comes to adjuncts, the quality of interactions is much more important than the quantity. Moreover, similar to their full-time, tenure-track peers, adjuncts live to make an impact on their students. It is often what matters most to them.

As with all humans' needs, a psychological sense of community is paramount for adjunct faculty. But contingent faculty often achieve that belonging in ways that differ from their full-time counterparts. For adjuncts, the needed connection to someone on their campus is just one person. Most participants referred to their connection by their first name without prompting during interviews. These unprompted name drops signified a close, trusting relationship with that person. For adjuncts with that type of connection, it is often enough to help them feel engaged with their college or university in a meaningful way.

Keep in mind that there is a direct link between workplace culture and well-being. People who feel valued and supported in their workplace tend to suffer less burnout, depression, and anxiety than those who do not.[4] Therefore, administrators who directly supervise adjunct faculty play a critical role in their well-being. In the CCCU, most supervisors are department chairs. Because they have such an impact on adjuncts, training chairs to positively interact with their adjunct faculty is paramount. Unfortunately, chairs typically received little training at all. The onus, however, rests on CCCU institutions to provide training that promotes the well-being of their adjunct faculty.

When adjuncts have connections with colleagues in addition to their supervisor, it only increases the likelihood of developing institutional affinity. While still limited, these additional connections are most often with a small group—other faculty and administrators in their department. This sentiment was captured through statements such as, "I have a lot of connections with those in the Communications Department, not very much with anyone else."

For the adjuncts in the study, a common theme arose regarding the needs fulfilled, or needing to be fulfilled, through relationships. For most, a positive relationship revolves around feeling trusted and valued. Not only do many adjuncts express their need

In short, adjunct faculty who have positive, life-giving relationships at their institutions will, in turn, tend to have impactful relationships with students and others.

to trust the institution(s) for which they work, but they expressed the necessity that the institution trusts them—and that they know it. Keep in mind that adjuncts who feel trusted and valued often do so through the relationship of "that one person" mentioned above.

The types of positive interaction required to foster well-being display characteristics such as loyalty, trust, and care for adjuncts' best interest. One adjunct described their connection to their institution by saying, "I don't have loyalty to institutions, but I do have loyalty there because they have

reciprocated. They've said like, 'Hey, you're good at what you do. You've been here a long time. We're going to do these things for you,' you know." Another adjunct expressed a willingness to go above and beyond in their work, stating that they will "do things for [the institution] to help them out, because I feel like they really respect me, and they really have my best interest at heart."

Antithetically to positive adjunct connections, negative interactions with only a few individuals can create feelings of alienation for adjuncts. These types of interactions can happen with supervisors or other faculty. For example, when adjuncts feel uninformed by their institution, this silence can often lead to alienation. Interviews revealed instances when adjuncts learned of major changes their university made through their local news rather than their supervisor. Other instances described included only hearing from the supervisor when there is a problem or having no avenue to advocate for oneself. These types of interactions, or this lack of interaction, lead adjuncts to feel as if they do not matter to the institution.


Although full-time faculty can be a catalyst for positive institutional connection for adjuncts, when full-timers see themselves as "better than" adjuncts, it can be intensely alienating. One adjunct described this type of interaction by saying, "I feel the sense of like, 'Well, you're kind of beneath me because you're an adjunct, and I'm a faculty person.'" While discussing the idea of alienation, another adjunct shared a similar sentiment: "I think alienating is [a good] term. I would add to it just as an enhancer [that it] just feels like I'm kind of beneath them in some sense." For some adjunct faculty, the disconnect between them and their full-time peers is exceptionally salient. This disconnect was captured well when a participant stated, "The full-time faculty really don't understand what it's like to be an adjunct."

It is important to note, however, that adjunct faculty do not necessarily suffer from imposter syndrome. Most of the contingent faculty at CCCU colleges and universities are credentialed and qualified to teach—and they know it. They are also aware that their relationship with their institution is

symbiotic. They know that they provide a service the institution needs. Adjuncts teach because they either need gainful employment, as an outlet for their calling, or both. Colleges and universities need adjuncts most often to fill gaps in course loads and to remain financially solvent. Therefore, the relationship between institutions and their adjunct faculty needs to be nurtured. In the end, the goal for every college or university is captured by this adjunct who felt a strong connection to her institution: “I know the school, and the school knows me.”

These insights regarding adjunct faculties’ institutional connection, affinity, and well-being necessitate the development of support practices that can positively impact adjuncts. Nurturing adjunct relationships well centers on providing what they need. First, these provisions begin with providing practical needs, such as appropriate IT support. However, it is important that the communication adjuncts receive from their institutions includes much more than IT help. Second, and possibly most importantly, establishing clear channels of communication is paramount. Maintaining regular communication that includes a personal touch,

such as, “How are you doing?” or “Is there anything you need?” and offering up any information that may help the adjunct feel a greater engagement with the institution will promote the institutional connection they so desire and need.[5]

The future of the higher education world will likely continually live in tension between the use of adjuncts as part of a sustainable financial model for colleges and universities and the impact the adjunctification of higher education has on contingent faculty and student outcomes. Therefore, constant evaluation and adjustments are needed regarding how adjuncts are hired, onboarded, trained, and supported so that as the number of adjuncts continues to increase, the negative impact on their well-being and on student outcomes decreases. In the coming year, the CCCU hopes to conduct a nationwide quantitative study on adjunct faculty working at member institutions. 

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JEFF CLAWSON, Ph.D.
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FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

*Leading the CCCU
Into the Future*

An Interview with
President David A. Hoag, Ph.D.



On September 1, 2024, Dr. David A. Hoag became the eighth president of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities. This spring, he sat down with Dr. Todd C. Ream, professor of humanities, executive director of faculty research and scholarship, and senior fellow for programming for the Lumen Research Institute at Indiana Wesleyan University (Marion, IN). Dr. Ream also serves as the senior fellow for public engagement at the CCCU and the publisher of *Christian Scholar's Review*, where he hosts the weekly “Saturdays at Seven” conversation series with Christian thought leaders.

In their discussion, Dr. Hoag and Dr. Ream discussed the integration of faith and learning, vocation, and the opportunities and challenges facing Christian higher education today. Below is an excerpt of the discussion, edited for length and style. You can listen to their full conversation at www.christianscholars.com.



TODD REAM: Welcome to Saturdays at Seven, *Christian Scholar's Review's* conversation series with thought leaders about the academic vocation and the relationship that vocation shares with the Church. Our guest is David Hoag, president of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities. Thank you for joining us.

DAVID HOAG: Honored to be with you today.

REAM: The integration of faith and learning is a practice that is definitive of Christian higher education, and while different Christian traditions or denominations approach this practice in various ways, almost all CCCU campuses contend that the integration of faith and learning is a hallmark of the education they offer. As the president of the CCCU, what is your assessment of efforts being made currently across the landscape when it comes to the integration of faith and learning?

HOAG: As we look at the CCCU, we represent 28 different denominations. So, you hit it right when you said there are going to be different ways in which we look at faith and learning and how we integrate that.

For such a time as this, it's so important for our schools to have a strong biblical worldview. With so much that is happening in our country and in our world right now, we really need to double down on this area. Because of that, this is one of our priorities now: how do we work with this next generation to integrate their faith in their discipline? They know their discipline, but they don't necessarily know how to integrate their faith in the work that they do.

There are great examples of what's happening at many of our institutions—at Baylor and Calvin and Missouri Baptist, Colorado Christian, Wheaton, Charleston Southern, the list just goes on. Many of them have different faith symposiums that they actually have on their campuses, but I want to make sure that the CCCU takes a leadership role in this whole area of faith integration.

REAM: One of the first decisions you made as president of the CCCU was to create a program that leads efforts related to faith integration. In particular, you appointed John Addleman, who formerly served as chief of staff for the CCCU, as the director of faith integration and program evaluation. In what ways do you envision the CCCU then can be of service to member institutions in such a capacity?

HOAG: Before I entered this role of president, I was a board member of the CCCU. We went through this strategic planning process, and time and time again, we kept seeing the importance of faith integration needing to be a big part of what we do. In addition, in my first three months on the job, we did a member survey and [our members] love the advocacy work that we do. They love the leadership development work we do. They love the communication. But there was a deep desire for us to take a greater role in faith integration.

John has an M.Div. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS), and so he studied theology. But the other great perspective with John is that he's been a [special assistant to the president] at one of our schools. He has also been very involved in faculty development, and so he knows how to bring groups of people together. John has been a great person to get things started with us.

We're going to have two different kinds of advisory committees. The first one deals with this kind of mission self-study because we want to look at the unique, theological perspectives of our missions.

And, for instance, one of the things that I'm seeing is schools that are doubling down on their Christian mission are doing very well from an enrollment perspective. So I think there's going to be some great work that that committee can work on as they look at that piece.

The other advisory group is going to take a look at faith integration. I want to be able to pick from some of the best minds across our schools in the United States as we get after faith integration in this work, because it's so important.

REAM: You mentioned the importance of collaboration between institutions when it comes to faith integration and probably also in relation to a myriad of other efforts that are being led. But what are your hopes in the months and years ahead for programmatic efforts focused on fostering these kinds of relationships as schools work with one another, but also work with one another through the CCCU?

HOAG: I think collaboration in this area is going to be so important as we look at this comprehensively. Some schools are doing it really well, so by having great collaboration, they're going to be able to share what's working on their campus and, in a sense, help those that are still trying to figure it out.

I'm hopeful that right here in Washington, D.C., we can convene some gatherings of faculty from across the CCCU. I envision doing some things possibly with the Museum of the Bible, because they're right here, they're less than a mile away from our offices. I'm hopeful that between the great work that's happening in faith integration at other schools across our network and the collaboration of these advisory teams, we can come up with some great programs in this area.

REAM: I want to transition now to asking you about your own vocational discernment. You earned an undergraduate degree in education from Asbury College, now Asbury University, a graduate degree in education from the University of Kentucky, and then a doctorate in education from Saint Louis University. At what point did you discern that education would prove central to how you were called to exercise your vocation?

HOAG: It would have been [during my] time as a student at Asbury. I had incredible mentors and faculty and coaches that invested in me. I went right from graduating from Asbury to Kentucky for my master's, but I came right back to Asbury to serve, and I worked there nine years. Later on, I continued my career at a few other of our Christian colleges and universities. But it was that undergraduate experience that made the difference for me.



DAVID A. HOAG, Ph.D.
President,
*Council for Christian Colleges
& Universities*

David Hoag, Ph.D., is the president of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU). Hoag, a CCCU board member from 2021-2024, was most recently the president of Warner University, a CCCU institution in Florida, from 2016-2024. Throughout his career, Dr. Hoag served at four different CCCU institutions: Warner University, Trinity International University, Greenville University, and Asbury University. Dr. Hoag holds a bachelor's degree in education from Asbury University, a master's degree in education from the University of Kentucky and a Ph.D. in higher education from St. Louis University.



TODD C. REAM, Ph.D.
Professor of Humanities & Executive Director
of Faculty Research and Scholarship,
Indiana Wesleyan University,
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Todd C. Ream serves on the faculty and administration at Indiana Wesleyan University, as a senior fellow with the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities and the Lumen Research Institute, and as the publisher for *Christian Scholar's Review*. He is the author and editor of numerous books including, most recently, *The Anxious Middle: Planning for the Future of the Christian College*.

REAM: Are there any authors in particular who also shaped your sense of vocation as an educator and/or perhaps to whom you turned for continued resourcing?

HOAG: Several. Especially as I look at leadership, Robert Birnbaum has a book called *How Colleges Work*, and I studied that book in graduate school. I can't tell you how many copies I have given to aspiring academic leaders because one of the things Birnbaum looks at is the different types of schools. I think it's really important to understand the different types of schools—how they work and how they operate. And I think one has to reflect on their own strengths and abilities because that will help drive where you may fit better.

REAM: I want to ask you now about some of those other institutions where you served and how they shaped your sense of vocation. You mentioned Asbury which we talked about, but also Greenville University, Trinity International, and then Warner University. What experiences from those institutions prove critical in terms of how your vocation and sense of understanding of it evolved?

HOAG: Well, when I went to Greenville, I was the vice president for advancement. On my vocational journey—it's been kind of interesting, Todd. I've kind of been at places that needed to be fixed, or they were struggling a little bit financially. When I started at Greenville, they were a few weeks away from not making payroll, and I had never been at a place that had experienced challenges like that.

It helped me develop on the business side, and that got me going on my academic research at Saint Louis University. I looked at the evaluation process of college presidents, but I also looked at higher ed finance. During [my] 13 years at Greenville, I was able to really learn how the financial side of the institution works and ways that

you can get better financially. We were very fortunate to have some record years in giving.

Now, I thought after I was at Greenville, I knew everything about higher ed because I had this degree in higher education from Saint Louis University, and then I went to Trinity International University, which has TEDS, a graduate school, a law school in California, campuses in South Chicago, Deerfield, and Miami, Florida. Oh, my goodness, I learned a ton during that time.

Then I was able to serve at Warner University in Florida. I really feel that I was prepared for that journey because of an experience I had at Greenville. I was able to be interim president when the president went on sabbatical—that would've been probably during the early 2000s, when my wife and I were able to experience what that was like. We knew at some point that we might be called to be a president of one of our institutions, and we had an incredible time at Warner, eight incredible years. I learned a lot. I loved the student experience, loved the faith development part of what you do with students there.

Again, a wonderful opportunity to serve at the four different Christian colleges that I've served at.

REAM: For individuals discerning whether they're also being called to serve as a president, what advice would you offer?

HOAG: One of my mentors said, "David, do you like roller coasters?" When you are looking at the role of the presidency, it is like a roller coaster.

You get on daily and you hear the click, click, click as you're going up because you don't know what the day is going to bring. You're going to have some incredible mountaintop experiences of God at work through a great gift that came through or a faculty recognition, followed by a challenge—something happens with a staff member or a student.

I like to [tell] people that are possibly pursuing the presidency [that] you really need to be called and have the passion, because you can't make up the different experiences that you're going to have on a regular basis.

REAM: In what ways did the university presidency change over the course of your tenure at Warner? And for individuals who are discerning a call to the presidency, in what ways could you estimate it might change over the course of at least the early phases of their tenure?

HOAG: I'll call it pre-pandemic and post-pandemic. You know, it was always kind of challenging, but I think what the pandemic did was it accentuated some of the financial strain that some of our schools are having.

We're in a really challenging advocacy environment. One of the things that we do here at the CCCU is advocacy work. We want to make sure that our religious liberties are protected, but also our student funding. The challenges as a president right now—you have some government intervention and you have maybe decreased funding from the federal side.

REAM: In the first six months or so in office that you've experienced to date, how many campuses have you had the chance to visit, and what have you learned through those visits on the ground?

HOAG: I have been privileged to be on over 20 campuses. In addition to the 20 campuses, I've met with several boards of trustees at their different retreats. One of the things that is so encouraging to me is that the schools that are doubling down on Jesus and their Christian mission, they are just thriving.

So I say to our schools, the first thing you need to do if you're struggling is focus on that Christian mission and execute that, because I think you're going to find things are going to get much better. I'm encouraged to see what's happening in that space.

I'm encouraged to see what's happening in the lives of our students. Transformation is taking place. They're going out and doing incredible things. Those interactions with faculty, staff, and students are unbelievable.

I went to visit [the CCCU's Scholarship and Christianity in Oxford program]. Imagine this: imagine 35 of the smartest kids from across our network of schools and hearing from them what they're studying in Oxford. I was just blown away because they're studying something that's really significant, but they're integrating their faith in that European educational model. It's really powerful just to see what's happening there.

REAM: In addition to mission, faith learning integration, and advocacy, things that we've talked about in terms of what the CCCU does, are there any other programs or efforts that you might want to highlight for us?

HOAG: I was just able to be at the Multi-Academic Conference in Atlanta. We had 500 leaders and potential leaders from campuses all over the United States. This would be vice presidents, deans, directors, aspiring deans, or aspiring VPs.

We had some plenary tracks that pull[ed] things together, and then on top of that, [attendees] were able to have tracks within their discipline. So you had advancement, you had campus ministry, evangelism, student life, and the list goes on. I was just so encouraged to see the leaders that we're developing through programs like that.

Fast forward, next January 29 to February 1, we're going to have our International Forum, and it's going to be [the CCCU's] 50th year. It's going to be biblical jubilee to celebrate Christian higher education. That's going to be a great gathering, and I'm looking forward to that.

A

One of my mentors said, “David, do you like roller coasters?” When you are looking at the role of the presidency, it is like a roller coaster.

—Dr. David Hoag






INNOVATION & HOPE

IN THE FACE OF THE ENROLLMENT CLIFF

BY KIMBERLY FELTON

As March and April approach every 12 months, more than one admissions director considers quitting. Sleep is sacrificed to anxiety: Are application numbers up? Down? Will jobs be on the line? Will their job be on the line?

The encroaching enrollment cliff is no comfort.



Once a threat on the horizon, the inevitable change of landscape is close enough now for universities to peek over the edge. The level of panic the view incites depends on the conversations and roadmapping that have taken place within institutions up to this point. The possibilities are challenging, but they are not hopeless.

To summarize the enrollment cliff:

- Due to falling birth rates since the Great Recession in 2007, 2025 holds the peak number of high school graduates before a gradual decline leads to approximately 13% (or nearly 500,000) fewer graduates by 2041. Twelve states and the District of Columbia are exceptions.
- Public perception of higher education also has fallen. The need for college and university degrees is in question, including in families that traditionally have sent their children to college. The cost of education factors in, as some feel the cost is disproportionate to the benefit—or they simply cannot afford it. Hispanic and biracial students are the exception, with growing numbers attending college.
- Fallout from COVID-19, increased political turmoil, changing demographics, and long-held internal structures and policies within institutions further complicate the issue and options.

While “enrollment cliff” provides dramatic visuals, “slow decline in population” is closer to the truth. But beware of using this as cause for continuing business as usual. The decline has begun. Colleges and universities can survive and thrive, but only if they adapt. A number of CCCU members began adjusting their course years ago, learning from their own and others’ educational experiments and innovating for the future.

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GEOGRAPHY MATTERS

Projections point to the Northeast, Midwest, and West sustaining the greatest declines in high school graduates. Fertility rates are lower in these regions, fewer families are moving there, and resident high school students are considering colleges in warmer climates.

With a decrease in the enrollment pool, location also matters to colleges and universities surrounded by multiple higher education options. Smaller Christian institutions may not have the financial resources of nearby competitors, but they offer a unique mission, integrating faith and learning; they have the ability to form strong bonds between faculty, staff, and students; and they have the agility to create beneficial partnerships within their local community.

For instance, in 2024, Trinity Christian College (Palos Heights, IL), established a partnership for their nursing program with Northwestern Medicine Palos Hospital. Northwestern Medicine funds the final two years of tuition and hosts clinical rotations for nursing students. In return, the students commit to three years of employment at the hospital after graduation. The hospital builds an employee base; the students gain extensive experience and lower debt, and have guaranteed employment post-graduation.

Howard Payne University (Brownwood, TX) is reaching outside of their local community, forming an enrollment pipeline beginning with elementary students. In February of this year, HPU announced partnerships with Carroll Independent School District

(Southlake, TX) and Santa Fe Christian School (Santa Fe, NM) that guarantee automatic acceptance for students in the top 50 percent that graduate with a GPA of 3.5 or higher. The Gold and Blue Partnership program includes a scholarship valued at \$60,000 over eight semesters.

ADJUSTING FOR THE NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT

According to Dr. Amanda Staggenborg, the CCCU’s vice president for communications, the difference for the colleges and universities that are thriving is that they are willing to embrace new programs and opportunities. “These schools realize the opportunities to expand their graduate and doctoral programs and create micro-credentialing certificate programs, in addition to providing more opportunities for online learning.”

Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU; Marion, IN) began a new partnership this year with Advanced eClinical Training to provide online, short-term healthcare training. The collaboration expands IWU’s educational offerings, giving students access to comprehensive healthcare training content—particularly beneficial for working students to gain new skills or advance their careers.

IWU also formed partnerships with the Cincinnati State Community College System and Ivy Tech Community College that allow community college students to transfer to IWU online programs. Transferring students receive a 15% discount on all online bachelor’s and associate-to-master’s degrees, with a special \$250 per-credit-hour rate for RN-BSN students. Cincinnati State students also may transfer up to 90 credits toward an online Bachelor of Science degree.

LINKING ARMS

Some CCCU institutions are joining forces to strengthen their programs. Students earning a Bachelor of Science degree in counseling and psychology at Mid-Atlantic Christian University (MACU; Elizabeth City, NC) may be eligible for credit toward a Master of Social Work at Dordt University (Sioux Center, IA).

“The partnership will allow MACU grads interested in social work to streamline the process of getting into the field,” says Dr. David King, professor of counseling at MACU. “This will add more Christian social workers to the workforce and allow our students to become productive members of society sooner.”

In addition to benefiting the universities and students, the partnership highlights the beauty of the Church working together across denominational lines; Dordt is affiliated with the Christian Reformed Church, and MACU with Christian Churches and Church of Christ.

Asbury University (Wilmore, KY) is taking advantage of its proximity to a large state school. Prior to launching their own Bachelor of Science in nursing degree (beginning this fall), Asbury joined forces with University of Kentucky (UK) for dual enrollment. Once Asbury students complete an Asbury

bachelor’s degree, they can transfer with preferred admission to the UK College of Nursing for a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) in under five years.

The schools put a similar agreement in place in 2023 for a Doctor of Pharmacy degree, which guarantees its students up to five seats per year in UK’s program. Asbury students finish their Bachelor of Arts in biology – pre-pharmacy, then transfer to UK to complete the doctoral program.

THE QUESTION OF THRIVING

Whether the enrollment decline is swift or gradual, the question is one of thriving. The institutions that are merely surviving will face even greater challenges. Staggenborg suggests paying attention to two areas:

- Identify challenge areas for enrollment and retention within particular programs. Then take action to adapt programs’ content, structure, or access points for prospective students.
- What and how is the university communicating? From the time a student steps on the campus as a freshman until they leave as a senior and then afterwards, it’s a constant living relationship with the university. The university gives flexibility and autonomy to the student to make choices for their career, while infusing the faith-based element. Consistently communicating the uniqueness of this relationship and the success stories that flow out of it remind the constituency that this is a place they want to help thrive.

New ideas for recruitment, enrollment, and return on investment (ROI) are often discussed and debated, with differing resolutions and projections. Universities must be mindful of messaging confusion and mission drift. Institutions that thrive are willing to listen and adapt, valuing diverse voices, skill sets, and expertise while faithfully remaining steadfast in their Christian mission.

CCCU MEMBERS HAVE AN EDGE

Writing for *Forbes* in January 2025, David Rosowsky (Arizona State University, Senior Advisor to the President) said mission matters. Topping his 2025 wish list for higher education, he wrote, “We hope that colleges and universities lead with distinctiveness, not just rankings and ROI.... We hope they lean-in and lead in ways that align best with their mission, stakeholders, and audience... rather than just copy others. We hope they make their values matter by aligning their curricula, student experiences, institutional priorities and investments. We hope they break the pattern of homogenization that has diminished higher ed’s accessibility, reputation, and most importantly value.”

People are drawn to a mission.

Enrollment—and perhaps even more so, retention—relies on communicating your mission clearly and living out the promises your mission makes. When schools attract students (and parents of

students) who align with their lived mission, they are more likely to stay. At CCCU institutions, degrees are necessary and worthwhile, but always undergirded by the desire to know, love, and serve Christ and others.

In a 2024 piece by Sara Weissman, *Inside Higher Ed* reported that small religious colleges are increasing, not decreasing, their numbers. In an interview with Weissman, CCCU President David Hoag acknowledged that higher education is currently “under a microscope” and, in that context, institutions that are “leading with their Christian mission and their values” appeal to many students and families.

The history of higher education is one of innovation and adaptation, responding to anxiety-causing shifts in population, market demand, technology, and unexpected external challenges, like the COVID-19 pandemic. Through each challenge, Christian colleges and universities have adapted accordingly, embraced opportunities, and flourished in their mission. In this moment, standing at the edge of the enrollment cliff, it is time to thoughtfully strategize and innovate as Christian higher education prepares to step into the ever-changing future. 🌱

"The history of higher education is one of innovation and adaptation, responding to anxiety-causing shifts in population, market demand, technology, and unexpected external challenges, like the COVID-19 pandemic."

Kimberly Felton has lived and worked in the Pacific Northwest for 30+ years, writing for international nonprofits such as Luis Palau Association and Medical Teams International. Her freelance writing has been published by George Fox University, Oregon State University, *Christianity Today*, and others.



KIMBERLY FELTON



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A white flower with five petals and a yellow center is in sharp focus in the lower-left foreground. The background is a soft-focus landscape featuring a bright, low sun creating a warm, golden glow over a range of mountains. The sky is a mix of orange and blue, and the foreground ground is covered in low-lying, textured vegetation.

A New Dawn

in Christian Higher Education

Academic Excellence and Innovation
Amidst Challenges

By Dr. Amanda Staggenborg

Higher education is undoubtedly experiencing a challenging season. From external media circles to internal boardroom meetings, the challenges are discussed and debated daily. These challenges are often brought about by society's perception of higher education's purpose. Christian institutions are impacted by these challenges but additionally experience a different kind of perception... one that is often inaccurate and uninformed. The general perception, outside Christian circles, is that Christian higher education is not as academically competitive, economically valuable, or research-driven as secular education. In reality, Christian institutions provide academic, research, and industry practice that often surpass that offered by many of their secular counterparts.

The American higher education system is rooted in faith. In *A History of American Higher Education*, John Thelin stated that, "religion occupied a central but confined place in the colonial colleges." Completing a degree program was rare, as, according to Thelin, less than one percent of the colonial population was college-educated and "there is little evidence that any of the colonial colleges ever enrolled more than a hundred students in a single year." Thelin stated that many of America's founding fathers were first-generation college students themselves and universities of the time "combined strong Christian faith with secular resolve."

After the Revolutionary War, higher education adapted and evolved, as did the public perception of its necessity and value. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, cultural, political, and social changes greatly influenced academic goals and objectives. Some Christian universities experienced a "mission-drift" while others remained steadfast in Christian vision and mission, ensuring that all aspects of the university system were aligned with a faithful, biblical understanding of Christ's purpose.

Throughout the twentieth century, higher education revamped its image. Higher education was no longer exclusively for the elite but became attainable for all, especially with the advent of scholarships, financial aid, and the GI Bill. After the tumultuous years of the Great Depression and World War II, an outcome-based education providing sustainable skills appealed to many.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once proclaimed that, "God does not give us everything we want, but He does fulfill His promises, leading us along the best and straightest paths to Himself." This is a promise fulfilled at Christian institutions across the globe. However, paths in higher education are rarely straight; instead, they wind and twist, challenged daily by cultural and political pressures. The need to adapt but remain faithful and mission-driven creates a constant social balance between expectations, perceptions, and assessment of both the tangible and intangible outcomes of education.

The current perception is that higher education must be transactional in order to be valuable. Thus, the strength of programs is constantly tested and reframed based on its direct connection to a measurable career path. For example, a 2024 report from Pew Research titled "Is College Worth It?" exclusively assessed financial metrics, including full-time employment, median earnings, and poverty levels. Conversations about higher education in the media and on Capitol Hill often emphasize the concept of ROI, or return on investment. According to these conversations, higher education is only "worth it" when a diploma funnels graduates into high-paying jobs.

Of course, the true value of Christian higher education surpasses simple financial calculation. Christian college campuses are sites where the love of truth, wisdom, and beauty thrive, as students simultaneously deepen their love for the Lord, develop their intellectual capacity, and, yes, learn practical skills that will serve them throughout their careers and their lives.

Here, the central misconception about Christian higher education rears its head. Do Christian colleges and universities offer robust and rigorous academic programs? Do they competitively prepare graduates to enter the workforce and thrive in the modern world?

In the words of Pew Research Center from "In America, Does More Education Mean Less Religion?," "The idea that highly educated people are less religious, on average, than those with less education has been a part of the public discourse for decades." Implicitly, this view suggests that advanced learning and faith are incompatible—a view that naturally extends to diminish the strength, relevance, and legitimacy of Christian colleges and universities. However, Pew's findings from 2017 already begin to unravel this narrative.

While it is true that a smaller percentage of college graduates profess a belief in God or say they pray regularly, Pew's research found that among Christians, those with higher levels of education are as

likely or more likely to express high levels of religious commitment. Faith and higher education can, of course, go hand in hand—and at Christian colleges and universities, students can intentionally deepen their faith while pursuing a meaningful, and academically competitive, education.

Christian institutions are heavily engaged in innovative research. At Abilene Christian University (Abilene, TX), the Nuclear Energy eXperimental Testing (NEXT) Lab conducts research utilizing molten salts in nuclear energy to support academic research. According to the ACU website, "The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has issued a construction permit to Abilene Christian University to build the Natura MSR-1, marking the first liquid salt fueled reactor licensed by the NRC in American history and the first U.S. university research reactor approved in more than 30 years." The website goes on to say, "The mission of ACU's NEXT Lab, powered by Natura Resources, is to provide global solutions to the world's need for energy, water and medical isotopes by advancing the technology of Molten Salt Reactors while educating future leaders in nuclear science and engineering." In August 2024, Senator Ted Cruz visited the facility and met with faculty and students to discuss their groundbreaking research.

At Charleston Southern University (North Charleston, SC), students are enrolled in the four-year-old aeronautics program, working toward a Bachelor of Science in a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)-certified program. According to the CSU website, "The CSU aeronautics program that started less than four years ago has grown from 19 students to more than 150 students. Year over year, the

program has seen a 33% enrollment growth in its three degree tracks: professional pilot, aerospace management, and aviation maintenance management." Charleston Southern University is a leader in flight-school training, purchasing a flight training school in 2025 while also planning a flight simulation lab.

A flight school was also announced in April 2025 at John Brown University (Siloam Springs, AR), partnering with ARH Aviation to enable students to complete pilot training while earning a Bachelor of Science degree, taking professional flight courses in addition to a business core and technical electives. The university is addressing the industry need for certified pilots by providing applied training and specializations to make them among the best in the air.

Business leaders learn from Christian education as well. At Biola University (La Mirada, CA) in southeast Los Angeles County, In-N-Out leaders learn in a cohort taught by professors from the Crowell School of Business and the School of Fine Arts and Communication in a program "aimed to increase their knowledge and understanding of financial, operational and strategic concepts and how they function within the In-N-Out business model.... One of the mutual points of understanding between In-N-Out and Biola was that the curriculum was faith-based and emphasized Christian values," according to the Biola University website.

Students at Christian universities are enthusiastic about serving others while making a positive impact in the world. In February 2025, students from Ouachita Baptist University (Arkadelphia, AR), published research findings in *microPublication Biology*, a national

"Christian college campuses are sites where the love of truth, wisdom, and beauty thrive, as students simultaneously deepen their love for the Lord, develop their intellectual capacity, and, yes, learn practical skills that will serve them throughout their careers and their lives."

peer-reviewed, open-access scientific journal. Students began their research in a biology class and, according to a university press release, “decided to continue research on miR-127, a molecule found by a previous Ouachita research team to be linked to breast cancer.” Christian higher education students are contributing to the fight against cancer with their research advancements and progress.


Meanwhile, at Dordt University (Sioux City, IA), experienced and faithful agriculture faculty teach students. “Dordt’s Agriculture Service Technology courses blend hands-on learning with a strong biblical foundation and workplace skills that will equip you to serve as a technician in a John Deere dealership,” in the words of Dordt University’s website. The partnership between Dordt and AgriVision Equipment is highly successful since the first cohort began in the fall of 2024 and ensures that students have a promising future while living Dordt’s mission of “work[ing] effectively toward Christ-centered renewal in all aspects of contemporary life.”

From the east coast to the west coast and everywhere in between, Christian colleges and universities are actively working to prepare students for a faithful calling that combines professional fulfillment and a life of service according to God’s purpose—and universities are not the only ones telling their stories of success.

Christianity Today journalist Hannah McClellan wrote in a January 2025 article that, “Religious schools have fared the best... According to 2021 enrollment data from the *Digest of Education Statistics*, schools

with religious affiliation saw student declines of just 3 percent in 10 years. Secular private schools, by comparison, have had the greatest declines, losing 18 percent of their student population in that same period.... And evangelical schools appear to be doing better than other religious-affiliated institutions.” Sara Weissman at *Inside Higher Ed* wrote an article in November 2024 about the positive upward trend in Christian higher education. Weissman wrote that, “Leaders of religiously affiliated colleges say enrollment at small, relatively strict faith-based institutions is booming.”

Students, and their families, can tell that Christian institutions of higher education offer something special: a diverse range of degree programs, which foster academic excellence and remain rooted in the Christian faith.

As history shows, despite inaccurate and limited secular media perceptions, Christian higher education has endured throughout countless seasons of change. Evolution in student population, academic programming, and community engagement is blended with the foundation of faith and scholarship. Christian higher education remains strong, nourishing the hearts, souls, and minds of generations of students. 

"From the east coast to the west coast and everywhere in between, Christian colleges and universities are actively working to prepare students for a faithful calling that combines professional fulfillment and a life of service to God's purpose..."



AMANDA STAGGENBORG, Ed.D.
VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS,
COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN COLLEGES &
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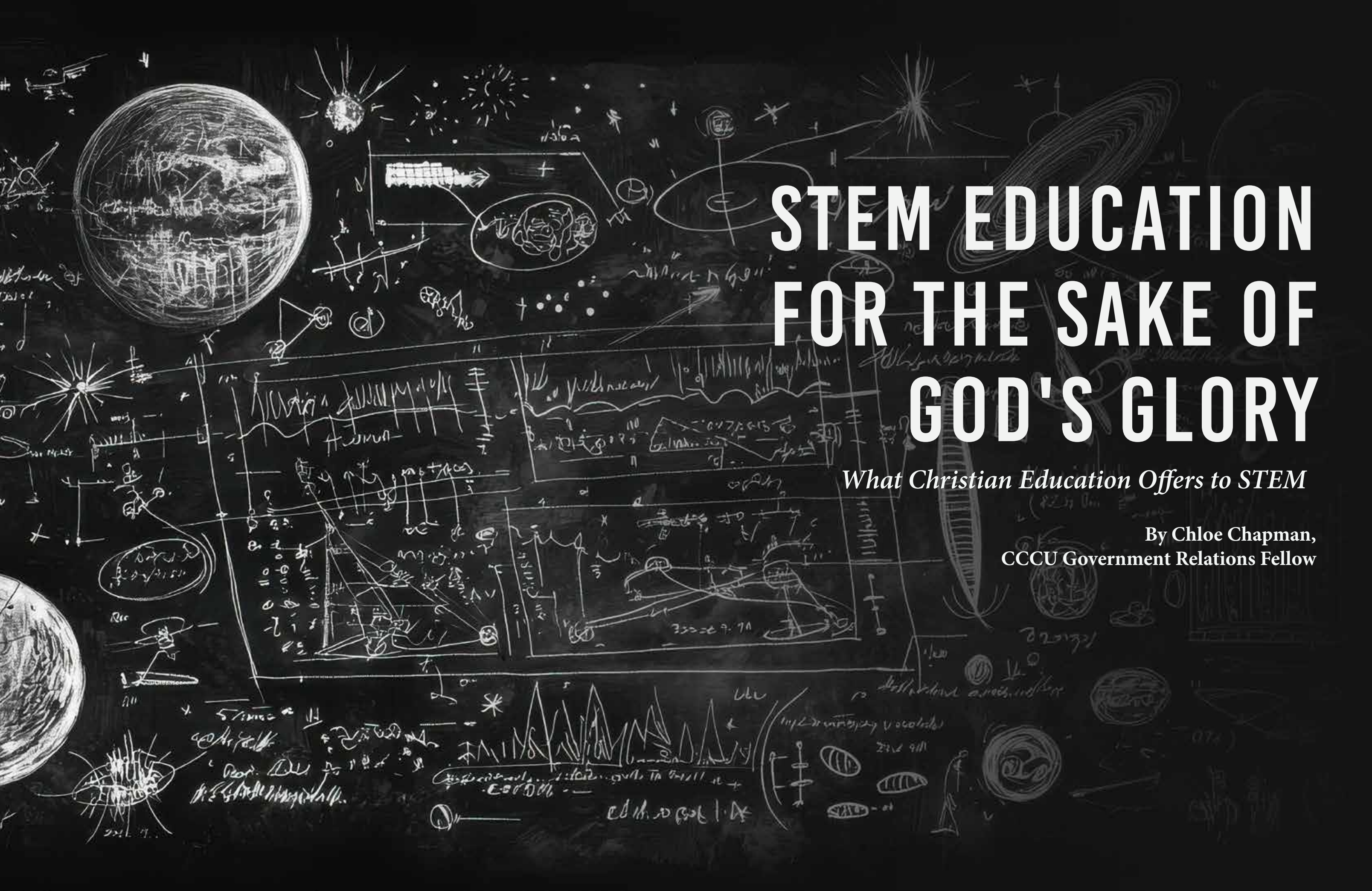
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STEM EDUCATION FOR THE SAKE OF GOD'S GLORY

What Christian Education Offers to STEM

By Chloe Chapman,
CCCU Government Relations Fellow

When I began my college search as a rising high school senior, I did not consider Christian higher education. I planned to study science in college, and I dismissed religious colleges and universities because I assumed that they would not have good STEM programs. This assumption was largely due to my experience with Christian primary education; I grew up attending a classical Christian school where science was the weakest program. As graduation approached, I decided to apply exclusively to secular universities.

For many people, scientific rigor is not among the first things that come to mind when thinking about Christian higher education. There is an assumption in the wider culture that science—or other more technical endeavors—are not priorities in Christian scholarship. Some may even go so far as to say that Christians are anti-science, that to walk a life of faith and study science is to live a contradiction.

The assumption that Christians turn away from the more scientific, technical academic pursuits is disheartening. At its core, to study science, technology, engineering, and math is to dive deeper into the physical and rational laws that were divinely designed to govern the world around us—the world that was itself divinely designed for us to inhabit, explore, and steward. The curiosity and exploration that is fundamental to academia, and that births STEM study, is a reflection of how God created us to be: filled with a deep inner longing for truth. All scholarship is a search for truth, and every truth reveals more to us about the image of God. Therefore, every truth is worth seeking out, vitally including scientific and technical truths.

“The Christian college will not settle for a militant polemic against secular learning and science and culture, as if there were a great gulf fixed between the secular and the sacred. All truth is God’s truth, no matter where it is found, and we can thank him for it all.”

—Arthur Holmes,
The Idea of a Christian College

Christian colleges are, in fact, positioned to teach STEM subjects in a highly unique and valuable way, not striving to understand how the world works purely for the sake of understanding, but also to better know the One who designed it. To understand God’s creation and His intentional, ordered design is a divine calling. The wonder that can be found in the science lab, the curiosity provoked in the math classroom, or the understanding that dawns in the engineering lecture are all glimpses at a Creator who built it all and modeled us in His image, with logic, curiosity, and creativity. A STEM education at a Christian college is set apart in the way that it cultivates this attitude towards exploration: learning for the sake of God’s glory.

“By leading [the learned] life to the glory of God I do not, of course, mean any attempt to make our intellectual inquiries work out to edifying conclusions... I mean the pursuit of knowledge and beauty, in a sense, for their own sake, but in a sense which does not exclude their being for God’s sake. An appetite for these things exists in the human mind, and God makes no appetite in vain. We can therefore pursue knowledge as such, and beauty as such, in the sure confidence that by so doing we are either advancing to the vision of God ourselves or indirectly helping others to do so.”

—C.S. Lewis, *Learning in War-Time*



CHLOE CHAPMAN
CCCU Government Relations Fellow
Graduate of the University of Washington

I am fortunate that my experience studying a science at a secular university allowed me to cultivate a God-glorifying attitude towards learning. My biggest anxiety in going to college was whether I would find good Christian community, and I had to work hard and step far out of my comfort zone to do so. I ended up with a group of Christian peers who were also working towards STEM majors, and by walking through my education with them and digging deeper into my own motivations for studying science, I developed a strong desire to know God better through my studies of the universe. I am incredibly thankful for my time in college and what these friends taught me, but I also recognize how much harder it was to find like-minded Christians at a secular university than it would be at a Christian institution. While my efforts were rewarded, it is a difficult barrier for Christian college students at secular institutions to overcome.

Over the past few years, I have learned that my early assumptions about Christian higher education were unfounded. As I have discovered through my time as a fellow at the CCCU, hundreds of Christian colleges across the country feature high-quality STEM programs, offering students a rigorous education in the sciences while helping them to develop a strong, faith-based perspective of their academic work. There are many more opportunities for Christian students wanting to study STEM than I realized, opportunities that I hope other Christian high schoolers are more aware of than I was. My research into Christian STEM programs has made me excited for the next generation of scientists and engineers as they learn about STEM with an attitude of wonder, founded in seeking out the glimpses of their Creator that He has planted throughout His Creation. 🌱

STEM Education on CCCU Campuses

The vast majority of the CCCU's 130+ North American institutions offer at least a few STEM majors, with some graduating nearly a third of their students with STEM degrees. These degrees range across the entire spectrum of technical fields, including biology, all forms of engineering, mathematics, physics, computer science, statistics, and chemistry. Many of our institutions place a great emphasis on exploring STEM subjects from a Christian worldview alongside a focus on academic rigor. In this way, they effectively equip students with the tools to contribute meaningfully to fields of STEM, while also responding faithfully to the Christian call to care for the world. The following page provides just a glimpse at some of the STEM education work currently conducted at Christian colleges and universities.

Abilene Christian University: Cutting-Edge Chemistry Research

At Abilene Christian University (Abilene, TX), undergraduates are key to research in the department. This year 85% of graduates participated in undergraduate research. The center of the research program is the Summer Research Institute where students work full time with faculty for eight weeks. During these research experiences, students gain hands-on experiences with high-end equipment such as an LCMS-QToF, an X-ray diffractometer, and ICP-MS. Projects students are working on include synthesizing molecules centered on osmium and solving their structures, isolating potential antibiotics, and working on next-generation molten salt nuclear reactors.

Azusa Pacific University: Statistics Education Research

At Azusa Pacific (Azusa, CA), Dr. Kaitlyn Fitzgerald works with several undergraduate students researching statistics education. Her most recent article discusses the use of rain cloud plots for better clarity in statistics and is coauthored by two undergraduate students. She also has students working on grants to develop curriculum for statistics education and to uncover the impact of APU's Learning Assistants program on retention and STEM identity.

Baylor University: Research-Forward

Research is built into the Bachelor of Science program at Baylor University (Waco, TX): in the spring of their sophomore year, students take an Introduction to Research course, and they are expected to pursue research with Baylor faculty members or through a National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) program at another university or lab before the fall of their senior year. Many of Baylor's undergraduate students present their research at conferences and are coauthors on papers.

Olivet Nazarene University: Engaging in Study

At Olivet Nazarene University (Bourbonnais, IL), students have many opportunities to engage in their subject in a more hands-on way. Students participating in the honors program complete a research project; recent projects have included the topology used to model black holes and the design of a robotic exoskeleton. Many of Olivet's students complete internships for various technical companies, and Olivet has been designated as a Center of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity by the National Security Agency (NSA).

Seattle Pacific University: Blakely Island Field Station

Blakely Island Field Station, located in the San Juan Islands of Washington State, hosts students and faculty from across the country in summer biology and astronomy courses, as well as weekend field trips during the school year at Seattle Pacific University (Seattle, WA). SPU owns about 1,000 undeveloped acres on Blakely, including forests, the shorelines of two 70-acre lakes, and the marine waters of the Salish Sea. Areas of study included forest, marine, and wetland ecology, conservation biology, marine botany, and environmental physiology.

The CCCU loves to highlight the work of our institutions in ADVANCE, through our monthly newsletters, on social media, and more. To share details about your institution's programs, events, and/or faculty and student accomplishments, email us at editor@cccu.org!



An illustration of a graduate in a black cap and gown, seen from behind, standing on a path of white, fluffy clouds. The path leads upwards and to the right. The background is a solid teal color with faint, diagonal lines of a lighter shade. The overall mood is hopeful and aspirational.

HABITS OF HOPE

*EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES
FOR A WEARY WORLD*

A BOOK REVIEW BY KIMBERLY FELTON

Sometimes the end is a good place to begin:

"Faith believes God can. Hope believes God will. The issue on the Emmaus road is not faith. The issue is hope. Practicing the habits of hope requires faith, and as hope grows, faith deepens."

So writes Jon Kulaga in the conclusion of *Habits of Hope: Educational Practices for a Weary World* (IVP Academic, 2024). Edited by Todd Ream, Jerry Pattengale, and Christopher Devers, the book includes essays by experts in diverse fields of academia who dig beneath the pedagogy of their disciplines to offer conversation and tools to build a bedrock of hope for ourselves and our students—a sometimes elusive but always necessary foundation for thriving in life, and in higher education.

With Christian humanism as an assumed necessity, the writers in *Habits of Hope* tether the work of our present to the hope of our future. "When it comes to the cultivation of the virtue of hope," say the editors, "our expectation of the end of time narrates how we live in the present."

While humanism emphasizes human potential and reason, Christian humanism urges humanity to do their work and live into their potential—but anchors that potential in God, our creator. "Christian humanism not only occupies a history far more expansive than its secular alternative but can only be appreciated when theologically contextualized well," the editors write.

This is where the contributors to *Habits of Hope* come in, surfacing acts and attitudes of hope within their disciplines. Individuals who devote their lives to higher education are inherently hopeful, choosing our work because we hope to shape individuals, communities, and even nations. But the journey is long and can be arduous. This book serves to remind us of what we know, while also turning the prism to catch the light differently and cast new colors.

The challenge for the Christian university, writes Kevin Grove (University of Notre Dame) in his essay on the hope of education, is to articulate "a vision of Christian hope true to the Gospels that

does not close down inquiry, but enlivens it." Do not settle for a hope that is too small, he says, when we have the great hope of eternal life with God. This "great hope" should not be an afterthought, but a "teleological grounding that can give life and light to the classroom, the laboratory, and the institutional mission."

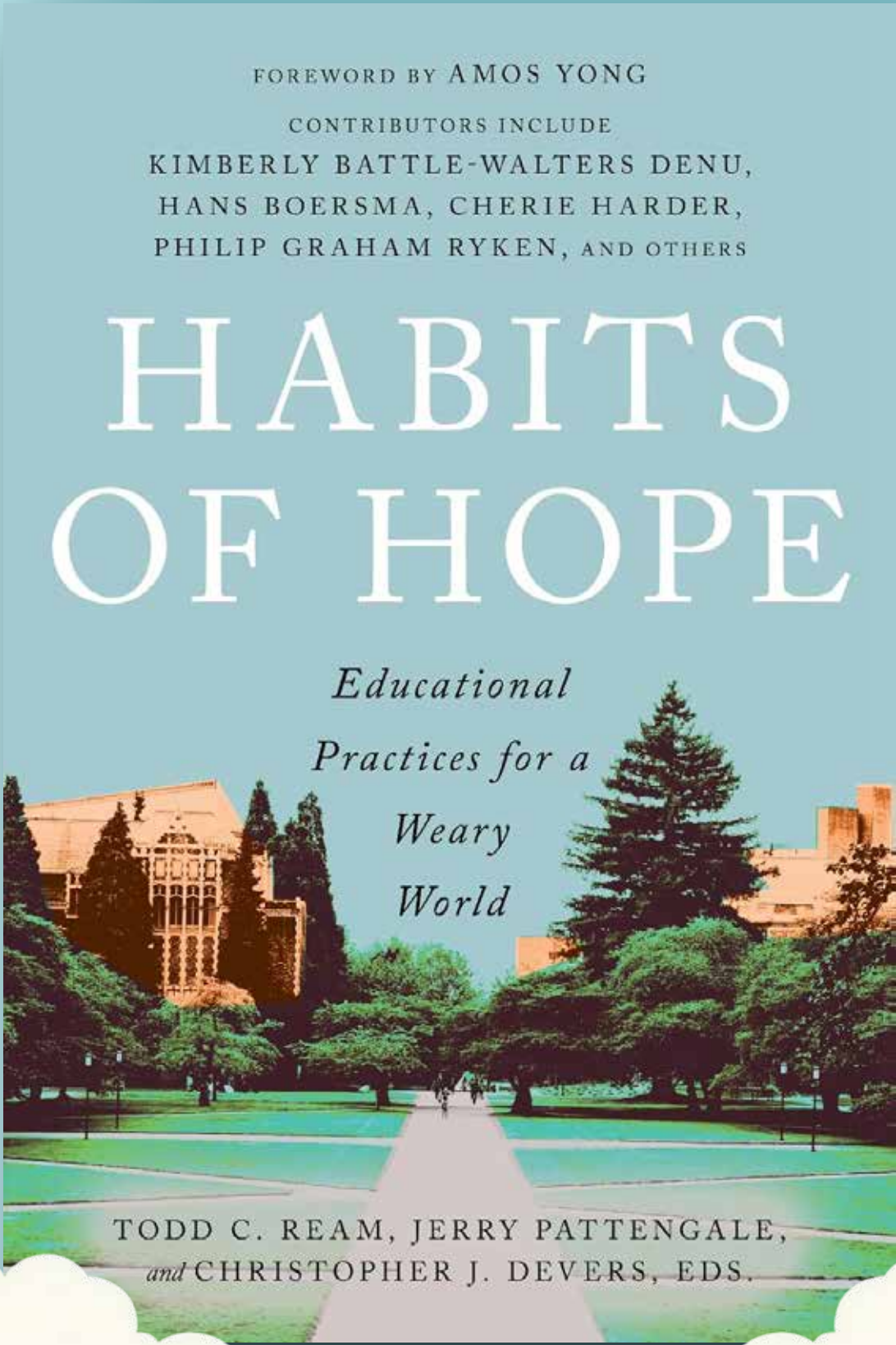
But how do we build hope into our classrooms, a hope that is ethos as well as words? Philip Graham Ryken, president of Wheaton College, tackles this question at the administrative level, tracking the history of integrating faith and learning as far back as Rome in AD 540. He names the challenges and necessity of integrating faith and learning in today's universities, providing examples and ideas from several schools.

David I. Smith (Calvin University) writes about teaching as a hopeful practice, warning against surrendering riskier hopes in favor of manageable routines. He urges us instead to let go of the "romantic" love for teaching and reach for an "enlarged love that extends beyond our own need to be heard."

Cherie Harder, president of the Trinity Forum, discusses the dynamic of conversation, which she identifies as essential to both education and a well-lived life. The key, she says, is cultivating high-quality conversations that simultaneously spur deeper thinking and build meaningful connections between individuals. Conversations that become explorations "illuminate new possibilities and reflect the purpose of education—to form as well as inform, to provide a travel guide to the good life."

Exploring the hopeful practice of diversity, Kimberly Battle-Walters Denu (Westmont College) says that Christian institutions have an obligation and a natural orientation to prepare students for meaningful engagement in a pluralistic world. Conflict, she says, is something to embrace, inviting us into deeper conversations and new understandings. This is the stuff of hope—a reminder of the transformative gospel, which reconciles us to God and invites us into "right relationship with God, others, and ourselves."

Conversations that become explorations "illuminate new possibilities and reflect the purpose of education..."



Meanwhile, reading, says Hans Boersma (Nashotah House Theological Seminary), is an avenue of hope “because it is the practice through which we enter into the eternal Word of God.” Exploring Maximus the Confessor’s pedagogy, Boersma delights in the very words themselves, offering throughout his chapter the Latin and Greek in addition to English. But he emphasizes the necessity of reading well—“skillfully or virtuously”—the three “books” God gives us in Christ, creation, and Scripture—all intended by God to lead us back to Him.

When it comes to the hopeful act of writing, Jessica Hooten Wilson (Pepperdine University) points toward God’s command in Scripture for Moses and others to write. In addition to discussing the hope given to both the reader and the writer through the historical, prophetic, and poetic genres, she urges us to write for healing, to know ourselves, and for the journey itself: “We write with anticipation, in faith that the future will happen, and with hope that what we do in the present matters.”

Throughout *Habits of Hope*, the tone changes from chapter to chapter, ranging from conversational to academic. Some writers provide concrete examples and suggested tools for the classroom; others leave application to the reader.

Each chapter stands alone, so you might read only what applies directly to your field. Yet they all also intertwine, as do the disciplines of higher education. And while the individual can be challenged and

encouraged, the book may best be used in community as a launching pad for discussion and brainstorming. Heavily footnoted, *Habits of Hope* offers rich resources for further study.

“Ultimately, the hope of Christian education is one that lets the promise of life in Christ inspire the flourishing of all other hopes,” Grove writes. Back on the Emmaus road, the two disciples, after realizing Jesus had been their traveling companion, said, “Didn’t our hearts burn?”—and they hurried to tell the other disciples. The writers of *Habits of Hope* want to stir the embers of our hearts as we invite students on the journey with Christ.

“Long after students forget the details of a particular topic offered on any given day,” write Ream, Pattengale, and Devers, “the manner in which the practice of teaching informed them about what it means to be human, what God may have called them to do with their lives, and to what end are they to exercise those callings will linger.” **A**

Do you know of a recent or upcoming book that is relevant to Christian higher education? Share your book review suggestions with us by sending an email to editor@cccu.org.



KIMBERLY FELTON

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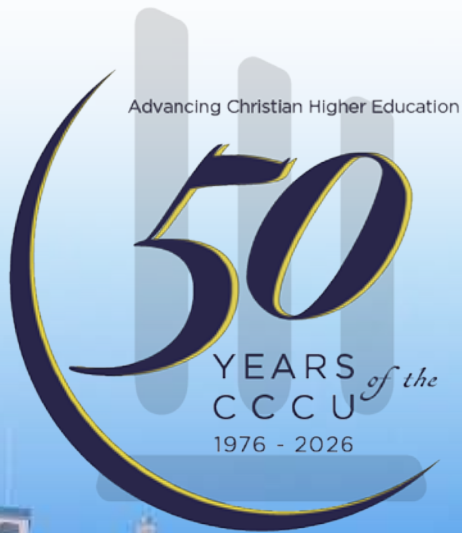
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